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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
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The past few weeks have been a deluge of anti-SOPA/PIPA sentiments, and
has culminated in many internet blackouts earlier this week. I've been
trying to follow a lot of the news, both pro and con, and I feel that both
pending bills go too far. Yes, the primary premise of both bills is to
try and stop international piracy, but as usual, the politicians do a lot
to add a lot of their own hidden agendas to the situation. Fix these bills
and then start again.

The world finally took notice this past week, and boldly made an online
statement to protest these two bills - they went black in deference to
these bills.

Our politicians, if they hadn't known up to now, realize the power of the
internet. They, the politicians, are now on notice. So, let's see what
these political "defenders" will come up with to change these two bills
to reflect the true [initial] cause for the bills. My guess is that
there is going to be a long time before a "final" edition of these bills
come to light, if ever.

On the local scene, it looks like winter has finally taken root here in
the Northeast. We've had a couple of "duster" storms over the past couple
of weeks; and we're staring down the barrel of our first major storm of the
year this weekend. I say major because it's reported going to be more than
a dusting. But, experience tells me that this is going to just be a
"typical" snow event, and nothing overly significant. Still, however, I
might just have to dust off the snowblower and use it to clear things up!
That's fine. Other than that, we've been laden with bone-chilling temps
for the past few weeks, making us remember fondly the lengthy time we had
enjoyed with our Indian Summer back in December. Rumor has it that we're
going back up with temps closer to Spring rather than Winter! Looking
forward to that!

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Diablo III Has Been Delayed Again!
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         Everybody Look Surprised - Diablo III Has Been Delayed Again

It looks like fans of Diablo III will have to wait a little longer for the
game to hit shelves. Try to act surprised. But really, it s already been
12 years, what s a few more months/years/decades?

The thing that makes this delay especially troubling is the amount of work
that Blizzard suggests still needs to be done. Typically, when a game is
delayed for technical reasons (as opposed to marketing reasons) it is just
a matter of fixing glitches and polishing a few things - and that is for
games that have had development cycles closer to 2-3 years than the 12
years that Diablo 3 has had. This delay actually sounds like a major
overhaul of a few of the game s core systems.

On Battle.net, Diablo III s game director Jay Wilson explained the reason
for the delay, and highlighted what work still needs to be done.

"While working on Diablo III we ve been called out for messing around with
systems too much, that the game is good as-is and we should just release
it. I think that s a fair argument to make, but I also think it s
incorrect. Our job isn t just to put out a game, it s to release the next
Diablo game," Wilson posted. "No one will remember if the game is late,
only if it s great. We trust in our ability to put out a great game, but
we re not quite there yet. In addition to finishing and polishing the
content of the game we re continuing to iterate on some of the core game
systems."

Many of the changes Wilson lists are relatively minor - identifying objects
will be quicker and easier (the Scrolls of Identification are gone), and
the developer is introducing a dedicated potion button for example. The
customization system is also being cleaned up, and things like the "Mystic
artisan," which Wilson claims just wasn t adding anything, will be
removed. That may change in future DLCs, but for now it is gone.

But once you begin to pull the thread, it is hard to stop it from
unraveling. Along with the somewhat minor changes above (in the sense that
they just need to be reworked in the coding), Blizzard is also
reconsidering some of the core systems. The biggest changes will be with
the skill and rune systems, but for now Wilson is keeping those under
wraps.

Blizzard will also be reworking the strength, dexterity, intellect, and
vitality of each character class, and defense, attack, and precision have
also been dropped as attributes. These are not just minor tweaks, but
fundamentally change the balance of the characters. Some of the display
menus will also be changed, including character stats will now be visible

in the inventory interface. All of which is going to take time.

Those that played the beta will also notice in the final game that the Cauldron of Jordan and Nephalem Cube have both been removed. The Stone of Recall has also been renamed the Town Portal, which makes the items obsolete.

Considering the game is - or was - scheduled for a Q1 release (Best Buy even announced a February 1 release date, which Blizzard quickly denied), the amount of work that apparently needs to be done is significant. The Q1 release date is almost certainly out of the question now, and there is even a chance that a 2012 release is in jeopardy.

Still, for as frustrating as the delays may be for fans, Wilson is right - people will forget the delays as long as the game is solid. You have to give Blizzard credit for standing by its guns and deciding to make major changes, under what must certainly be incredible pressure to deliver the game. In a day when most developers are happy with releasing a title and issuing patches to fix any issues, it is laudable that Blizzard is waiting until it is happy before releasing the game.

On the other hand, it has been 12 freaking years.

"Our hope is that by embracing our iterative design process in which we question ourselves and our decisions," Wilson said, "Diablo III won t just live up to our expectations, but will continue to do so a decade after it s released."

                    Atari Reveals Plans for Social Gaming Push

Atari has been looking closely at the modern video game industry to identify the direction it should take next. According to current CEO Jim Wilson, who has been speaking to CNN, their new approach will be to continue building a library of updated classic titles, while also moving into the burgeoning social gaming market.

Atari has already started to change their mobile gaming strategy and adapt well-known titles for iOS and Android. Asteroids: Gunner and Breakout: Boost are two of the most recent, and show Atari s adoption of the 'freemium' model, where the game is free to download, but in-app purchases are often needed to advance in the game or unlock new levels.

Breakout: Boost attracted 2 million downloads during its launch month, and Asteroids: Gunner reached the iTunes Top 10 list in its first two weeks of release. Mr. Wilson says Atari s brand name is very recognizable, and this 'discoverability' is crucial to success in the App Store.

The company has between 10 and 15 new titles planned for the coming year, some of which will be re-releases, while others will be new titles created by outside developers, but remaining true to the brand. The intention is to "bring back a powerful brand that consumers know and love" according to Wilson, but can some re-hashed classics and a series of social games do that?

It will perhaps depend on their definition of 'social gaming', as more-often-than-not, this means free games that rely heavily on in-app purchases to succeed.

Having already had a go at the MMO genre with City of Heroes before selling
off Cryptic Studios, Atari s plan is to appeal to gamers outside their
existing fanbase, indicating it s targeting companies such as Zynga rather
than Blizzard this time around.

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Key Facts About U.S. Online Piracy Bills SOPA and PIPA

The House of Representative's Stop Online Piracy Act and the Senate's
Preventing Real Online Threats to Economic Creativity and Theft of
Intellectual Property Act have generated fierce opposition within the
technology community. Here are some facts about the bills:

What would SOPA and PIPA do?

** The legislation, known as SOPA in the U.S. House of Representatives and
PIPA in the Senate, would use court orders to curb access to foreign
websites "dedicated to theft" through techniques such as disabling links
to those sites.

** They also cut off U.S.-based payments processing for those overseas
websites that traffic in stolen content or counterfeit goods.

Why do copyright holders say the law is needed?

** Entertainment companies and other copyright holders say many legal
copyright remedies aren't effective against big foreign sites such as
PirateBay. They say the bills will help curb online piracy that they claim
costs them billions of dollars a year. Technology companies say they too
oppose such piracy but argue that the proposed laws go too far.

What is the current status of the bills?

** The White House weighed in on January 14 with objections to the
legislation, particularly a provision that would have required Internet
service providers such as a Verizon Communications and Comcast Corp to
cut off access to infringing sites through a technology known as DNS
blocking.

In the days before the White House statement, backers of both bills had
said they planned to move away from those provisions. The Senate bill is
scheduled for a vote on January 24, although some supporters of the bill
have asked to postpone that vote. The House bill is still before the
Judiciary Committee.

Why do technology companies oppose the bills?

** Technology companies say the legislation would undermine an existing law called the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and its "safe harbor" provisions for websites and others that act in good faith in their handling of third-party content on their sites. Content companies say the bills simply fill gaps in the DMCA and wouldn't affect the safe harbor provisions.

** Technology companies express concerns that the legislation would encourage frivolous litigation. Content companies believe the difficulty of squeezing large payments out of illegal overseas sites would discourage frivolous litigation.

** Technology companies say users would circumvent new restrictions and piracy would still occur. Content companies say the law would create important tools for fighting piracy.

** Technology companies worry they would have to police their services for links to overseas pirated content. Content companies say the technology companies would have to act only if notified.

** Technology companies say part of the House legislation encourages providers to act against foreign sites on their own initiative by providing immunity from liability, which could lead to overaggressive actions against foreign sites. Content companies say that sites that act against pirates in good faith and with evidence to back up their actions shouldn't have to worry about lawsuits.

** Technology companies say there is no due process for overseas sites that are accused of piracy. Content companies say normal due process applies.

Wikipedia, Google Protest US Antipiracy Proposals

January 18 is a date that will live in ignorance, as Wikipedia started a 24-hour blackout of its English-language articles, joining other sites in a protest of pending U.S. legislation aimed at shutting down sites that share pirated movies and other content.

Reddit.com shut down its social news service for 12 hours. Other sites made their views clear without cutting off surfers. Google blacked out the logo on its home page, directing surfers to a page where they could add their names to a petition against the bills.

Local listings site Craigslist took a middle route, changing its local home pages to a black screen directing users to an anti-legislation page. After 10 seconds, a link to the main site appears on the home page, but some surfers missed that and were fooled into thinking the whole site was blacked out.

The Internet companies are concerned that the Stop Online Piracy Act in the House and the Protect Intellectual Property Act under consideration in the Senate, if passed, could be used to target legitimate sites where users share content.

The 24-hour Wikipedia blackout is an unprecedented move for the online encyclopedia. The decision was reached after polling the community of contributors, but dissenters say political advocacy undermines the site's

mission as a neutral source.

However, it's not complete: the block can be bypassed by changing browser settings to disable JavaScript, or by using the version of the site designed for cellphone screens.

There's also a "mirror" or copy, of Wikipedia called The Free Dictionary, but it's not up to date.

Obama Walks A Thin Line on SOPA

The White House waded into the red-hot online piracy debate with a statement Saturday that won't satisfy either side.

In a blog post penned by three administration officials, the White House said it opposes any bill that would make it easier for government to censor the Web or make the Internet less secure, but it stopped short of saying whether that includes two bills that have sent the tech industry into a panic.

If that sounds like a careful effort to walk a thin line, it is: Some of the president's biggest supporters in Hollywood and Silicon Valley and beyond are sharply divided over the bills, and the White House needs a way to keep both sides happy.

The Stop Online Piracy Act in the House and Protect IP Act in the Senate are an attempt by business interests led by Hollywood to crack down on people pirating movies and music and stop the sale of knockoff goods.

But Web companies and Internet freedom activists have cried foul, saying the bills would put restrictions on the Web in a way that could destroy the fundamental openness of the Internet and prevent the next generation of Facebooks or eBays from getting off the ground.

And where President Barack Obama comes down has been closely watched - because of his image as a technology guy, someone who harnessed the Web and young Internet users to win the presidency.

The administration did not take a definitive position on SOPA or PIPA on Saturday. But it was clear that the White House - while calling pirated movies and knockoff pharmaceuticals on the Web "a real problem" in need of a legislative solution - isn't enamored of either bill.

"While we believe that online piracy by foreign websites is a serious problem that requires a serious legislative response, we will not support legislation that reduces freedom of expression, increases cybersecurity risk, or undermines the dynamic, innovative global Internet," the administration officials said. "Any effort to combat online piracy must guard against the risk of online censorship of lawful activity and must not inhibit innovation by our dynamic businesses large and small. "

The authors - Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra, OMB Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator Victoria Espinel and Howard Schmidt, special assistant to the president and cybersecurity coordinator for National Security Staff - called on the bills' opponents to do more than just fight the bills and to work on private solutions to piracy problems.

"This is not just a matter for legislation. We expect and encourage all private parties, including both content creators and Internet platform providers working together, to adopt voluntary measures and best practices to reduce online piracy," they wrote. "So, rather than just look at how legislation can be stopped, ask yourself: Where do we go from here? Don't limit your opinion to what's the wrong thing to do, ask yourself what's right. Already, many members of Congress are asking for public input around the issue. We are paying close attention to those opportunities, as well as to public input to the administration. "

They said the administration would host a conference call and an "online event" to get more input and answer questions from the bill's opponents.

"Washington needs to hear your best ideas about how to clamp down on rogue websites and other criminals who make money off the creative efforts of American artists and rights holders," the officials said. "We should all be committed to working with all interested constituencies to develop new legal tools to protect global intellectual property rights without jeopardizing the openness of the Internet. Our hope is that you will bring enthusiasm and know-how to this important challenge.

In the meantime, though, the administration said it will "continue to work with Congress on a bipartisan basis on legislation that provides new tools needed in the global fight against piracy and counterfeiting, while vigorously defending an open Internet based on the values of free expression, privacy, security and innovation."

But it's not clear how far any legislation will get in a fiercely divided Congress.

Early Saturday morning, House Oversight Committee Chairman Darrell Issa said that Majority Leader Eric Cantor has assured him that SOPA won't move to the House floor this Congress without a consensus.

Cantor did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

Despite 40-plus Senate cosponsors from both parties and bipartisan support in the House, too, backers of the bills are reeling. This week, PIPA sponsor Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and SOPA author Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas) both abandoned a key part of their bills backed strongly by Hollywood interests.

The provisions would have allowed the government to seek a court order to block domain names of foreign sites that peddle pirated content.

On Friday, meanwhile, a half-dozen GOP senators pressed Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) to postpone a critical Jan. 24 cloture vote on PIPA. Reid declined Friday night, but the uproar over the legislation - and Reid's willingness to allow a free-wheeling debate - make for a hard slog ahead.

The two bills have ignited a firestorm online, with websites including Reddit and Wikipedia planning to stage a "blackout" Wednesday to protest them. They say that the legislation would create a new Internet "censorship" regime.

Smith tried to portray the administration statement as a win.

"I welcome today's announcement that the White House will support

legislation to combat online piracy that protects free speech, the Internet and America's intellectual property," Smith said. "That's precisely what the Stop Online Piracy Act does."

But opponents said the blog post showed the administration isn't on board with SOPA and PIPA.

It "shows that the messages being sent by the public in opposition to this bill are finally getting through to Washington," Sherwin Siy, deputy legal director of the consumer group Public Knowledge, said in a statement.

And NetCoalition, which represents Google and Yahoo, called the administration's statement "welcome news."

EU Internet Czar Tweets Against SOPA

The European Union's Internet czar on Friday added her voice to resistance to the Stop Online Piracy Act, in an unusually open comment on pending U.S. legislation.

"Glad tide is turning on SOPA: don't need bad legislation when should be safeguarding benefits of open net," Neelie Kroes, the EU's Commissioner for the Digital Agenda, said in a Twitter message.

The piece of legislation, currently in the House of Representatives, would allow the U.S. Justice Department to target legitimate sites where users share pirated content.

Outrage over SOPA earlier this week triggered a one-day blackout by Wikipedia's English-language service and other popular websites and sparked growing scrutiny of the bill.

The EU is also working to tackle online piracy, but is trying hard to do so without restricting Internet freedom.

"Speeding is illegal too: but you don't put speed bumps on the motorway," Kroes said in a second tweet.

The EU usually avoids openly criticizing pending legislation in the U.S, one of its biggest political allies and trading partners. But politicians on different sides of the Atlantic often don't see eye to eye when it comes to regulating the Internet.

The Commissioner's spokesman defended Kroes's comments, pointing to the widespread criticism of the bill.

"It shows that people do have very serious concerns about their access to the Internet and it shows that in addition to enforcement, which is very important, we need to be increasing the number of legal content offers that are available online," Ryan Heath told reporters.

He added that the EU already has legislation in place to fight online piracy and is currently working on an overhaul of it's rules for intellectual property rights in an effort to make it easier to obtain the rights to distribute content online legally.

Kroes, one of the most outspoken commissioners who imposed massive fines against Microsoft during her time as the EU's antitrust regulator, has embraced new media.

Also on Friday, she asked her more than 32,000 followers on Twitter to comment on the shutdown of popular file-sharing site Megaupload.com on her department's Facebook page.

House To Take Up Anti-piracy Bill in February

The House of Representatives will resume work next month on a controversial bill aimed at stopping online piracy of movies, music and other content, a leading lawmaker said on Tuesday.

The anti-piracy legislation has been a top priority for entertainment companies, publishers, pharmaceutical firms and others, who say it is critical to curbing online piracy.

Internet companies vigorously oppose the bills, arguing they would undermine innovation and free speech rights and compromise the functioning of the Internet.

The debate escalated over the weekend when White House officials raised concerns that the legislation could make businesses on the Internet vulnerable to litigation and harm legal activity and free speech.

Representative Lamar Smith, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said the proposed Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) was needed to protect American businesses from intellectual property theft, and that legislation would move forward.

"Due to the Republican and Democratic retreats taking place over the next two weeks, markup of the Stop Online Piracy Act is expected to resume in February," added Smith, a Texas Republican. "I am committed to continuing to work with my colleagues in the House and Senate to send a bipartisan bill to the White House."

The Senate is expected to begin voting on January 24 on how to proceed in considering its own version of the bill.

Both Smith and Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy have said that they plan to jettison a controversial portion of their bills which would block access for Internet users who seek stolen movies or music.

White House officials, including cyber-security czar Howard Schmidt, said in a blog posting on Saturday that they opposed the bills as currently written. But they said the Obama administration would work with lawmakers on a narrower, more targeted approach to online piracy to ensure that legitimate businesses - including start-up firms - would not be harmed.

Wikipedia, the popular community-edited online encyclopedia, will black out its English-language site for 24 hours Wednesday to oppose the legislation. Other smaller sites leading the campaign include Reddit.com.

Senate Vote on Online Piracy Bill Delayed

US Senate leaders announced Friday they were delaying next week's vote on an anti-online piracy bill that Wikipedia, Google and other Web giants have denounced as a threat to Internet freedom.

"In light of recent events, I have decided to postpone Tuesday's vote on the Protect IP Act," US Senate majority leader Harry Reid said in a statement two days after a wave of online protests against the bill swept the Internet.

"There is no reason that the legitimate issues raised by many about this bill cannot be resolved," Reid said. "I am optimistic that we can reach a compromise in the coming weeks."

Reid's announcement came amid eroding congressional support for the bills - the Protect IP Act (PIPA) in the Senate and the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) in the House of Representatives - intended to crack down on online piracy of movies and music and the sale of counterfeit goods.

Republican House speaker John Boehner said Wednesday there was a "lack of consensus at this point" on the House version of the bill and it would need further work in committee.

Wikipedia shut down the English-language version of its online encyclopedia for 24 hours on Wednesday to protest the legislation.

Google blotted out the logo on its US home page with a black banner and published an exhortation to users to "Tell Congress: Please don't censor the Web!"

Hundreds of other websites joined in the protest and Google said more than seven million people in the United States had signed an online petition against the bills.

The draft legislation has won the backing of Hollywood, the music industry, entertainment giants like Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., the National Association of Manufacturers, the US Chamber of Commerce and others.

But the bills have come under fire from online companies and digital rights groups for allegedly paving the way for US authorities to shut down websites accused of online piracy, including foreign sites, without due process.

On Thursday, US authorities shut down Megaupload.com, one of the world's largest file-sharing sites, and charged seven people in what they called one of "the largest criminal copyright cases ever brought by the United States."

The shutdown of Megaupload triggered a wave of retaliatory attacks by the online hacktivist group Anonymous, which temporarily disabled the websites of the Justice Department, FBI and Recording Industry Association of America.

In his statement, Reid said "counterfeiting and piracy cost the American economy billions of dollars and thousands of jobs each year, with the movie industry alone supporting over 2.2 million jobs.

"We must take action to stop these illegal practices," he said. "We live in a country where people rightfully expect to be fairly compensated for

a day's work."

Reid urged a co-sponsor of the bill, Senator Patrick Leahy, to "continue engaging with all stakeholders to forge a balance between protecting Americans' intellectual property, and maintaining openness and innovation on the Internet."

Another co-sponsor of the Protect IP Act, Senator Marco Rubio, withdrew his support for the bill on Wednesday saying Congress should "avoid rushing through a bill that could have many unintended consequences" on the Internet.

Other lawmakers also distanced themselves from the legislation, including influential Republican Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah.

"After listening to concerns on both sides of the debate over #PIPA, it is simply not ready for prime time," Hatch said on Twitter.

The controversy has pitted Hollywood against Silicon Valley, forcing members of Congress to try to walk a fine line between two powerful forces, and led to an unprecedented outpouring of coordinated protest on the Web.

White House spokesman Jay Carney said Wednesday that the problem of online piracy needs to be tackled but "in a way which does not impinge upon a free and open Internet."

Stop Online Piracy Act Markup to Resume in February

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas) today said that he expects the Committee to continue its markup of the Stop Online Piracy Act in February.

Chairman Smith: "To enact legislation that protects consumers, businesses and jobs from foreign thieves who steal America's intellectual property, we will continue to bring together industry representatives and Members to find ways to combat online piracy.

* Due to the Republican and Democratic retreats taking place over the next two weeks, markup of the Stop Online Piracy Act is expected to resume in February.

* I am committed to continuing to work with my colleagues in the House and Senate to send a bipartisan bill to the White House that saves American jobs and protects intellectual property."

SOPA/PIPA Indefinitely Shelved After Massive Protest

After a massive online protest that saw top 500 websites such as Wikipedia, Reddit, and Craigslist shut down for day, the controversial SOPA and PIPA bills have been tabled indefinitely in the Congress. The Protect IP Act (S.968, a rewrite of the failed 2010 Combating Online Infringement and Counterfeits Act) was scheduled for a vote next week in the Senate, but Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has stated that he was postponing the vote "in light of recent events", according to CNN. The

House of Representatives has also held their version of the bill, the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA, or H.R.3261.IH). House Judiciary Committee Chairman Lamar Smith stated that the House will "postpone consideration of the legislation until there is wider agreement on a solution." Both bills had widespread bipartisan support, but after key politicians withdrew their endorsement, the bills quickly withered on the Floor.

With protests in New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, and with an online petition containing more than 7 million signatures, opposition against SOPA/PIPA has been extremely vocal. However, the voluntary blackouts of several tech firms' websites have drawn the largest scorn toward this legislation. The fear that these acts will allow large media firms an unfair hand in seeking copyright infringement lawsuits and "cease and desist" injunctions against alleged copyright violators was the key motivation behind this protest; companies like News Corporation (who supported SOPA/PIPA) could legal order the shutdown of sites like YouTube, which may be hosting user-created content that violated Fox trademarks under the current wording of the bills.

Reid has suggested that the bills are not dead. "There is no reason that the legitimate issues raised by many about this bill cannot be resolved," according to the Senate Majority Leader. PIPA and SOPA have received uncharacteristic Democratic support, mostly due to Hollywood lobbyists. Time Warner, News Corporation, Comcast, and the Motion Pictures Association of America have all came out in support of SOPA/PIPA.

SOPA/PIPA is intended to combat piracy sites, such as the Pirate Bay, by forcing payment and network advertising services to investigate and respond to any outside claim that one of their customers is actively involved in the distribution of stolen or misappropriated American property, such as pirated software, movies, music, and television shows. The service would then have to terminate relations with that customer within five days. While the false accusations are illegal under SOPA/PIPA, the burden of proof is placed on the accused site and not on the accuser or the service provider.

Major Democratic contributors, such as the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO, are in support of SOPA/PIPA, and have threatened to withhold funding from the president's reelection campaign and from Congressional Democratic races. Key Democrats are concerned about this development, even though the White House has publicly came out against both bills although it did offer the possibility of support with a rewrite. In an open letter, the White House's Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator at the Office of Management and Budget, Victoria Espinel, wrote:

"Any effort to combat online piracy must guard against the risk of online censorship of lawful activity and must not inhibit innovation by our dynamic businesses large and small. Across the globe, the openness of the Internet is increasingly central to innovation in business, government, and society and it must be protected. To minimize this risk, new legislation must be narrowly targeted only at sites beyond the reach of current U.S. law, cover activity clearly prohibited under existing U.S. laws, and be effectively tailored, with strong due process and focused on criminal activity" We must avoid creating new cybersecurity risks or disrupting the underlying architecture of the Internet. Proposed laws must not tamper with the technical architecture of the Internet through manipulation of the Domain Name System (DNS), a foundation of Internet security. Our analysis of the DNS filtering provisions in some proposed legislation suggests that they pose a real risk to cybersecurity and yet leave contraband goods and services accessible online. We must avoid

legislation that drives users to dangerous, unreliable DNS servers and puts next-generation security policies, such as the deployment of DNSSEC at risk"

Yahoo Co-founder Jerry Yang Leaving Company

Yahoo co-founder Jerry Yang is leaving the struggling Internet company, as it tries to revive its revenue growth and win over disgruntled shareholders under a new leader.

The departure, announced Tuesday, punctuates the end of an era at Yahoo, a tarnished Internet icon that has spent much of the last decade scrambling to catch up to Internet search leader Google Inc. - a company that got early encouragement and advice from Yang. It comes just two weeks after Yahoo Inc. hired former PayPal executive Scott Thompson as its CEO.

Thompson is the fourth CEO in less than five years to try to turn around Yahoo. It's a daunting assignment that Yang was unable to pull off during his own tumultuous 18-month reign as the company's CEO in 2007 and 2008.

Yang, 43, endorsed Thompson in his resignation from Yahoo's board of directors. He had been on Yahoo's board since the company's 1995 inception.

"My time at Yahoo, from its founding to the present, has encompassed some of the most exciting and rewarding experiences of my life," Yang wrote in a letter to Yahoo Chairman Roy Bostock. "However, the time has come for me to pursue other interests outside of Yahoo."

The letter didn't say what Yang plans to do next. He doesn't need to work, thanks to the fortune he has amassed since he began working on Yahoo in a trailer at Stanford University with fellow graduate student David Filo. Yang is worth about $1.1 billion, according to Forbes magazine's latest estimates.

Yang is also stepping down from the boards of China's Alibaba Group and Yahoo Japan. Yahoo is negotiating to sell its stakes in both of the Asian companies as part of its efforts to placate investors. The deal could be worth as much as $17 billion, but it still faces a series of potential stumbling blocks.

Besides surrendering the board seats, Yang is giving up his position as "Chief Yahoo," an honorary title he held as he mingled among workers, while keeping tabs on various company projects.

Thompson could have an easier time overhauling Yahoo without Yang looking over his shoulder and possibly second guessing his decisions, said BGC Financial analyst Colin Gillis.

"This has the fingerprints of frustration on it," Gillis said. "It's one of those situations where it looks like (Yang) is losing the battle to control the company's direction and now he is saying, 'That's it, I'm out.'"

Although a popular figure among Yahoo employees, Yang had alienated the company's shareholders by turning down a chance to sell Yahoo in its

entirety to Microsoft Corp. for $47.5 billion, or $33 per share, in May 2008. Yahoo shares haven't topped $20 for more than three years. The stock gained 44 cents to $15.87 in extended trading after Yang's decision was announced.

The slump in Yahoo's stock has diminished Yang's wealth. He still owns a 3.6 percent stake in the company.

Yang conceivably could leverage those holdings to attempt to buy Yahoo's U.S. business after the Asian investments are sold. That is, if he can line up additional financing, Macquarie Securities analyst Ben Schachter wrote in a research note late Tuesday. Several buyout firms have already expressed interest in buying a substantial stake in Yahoo, spurring speculation that Yang might work with them to acquire a controlling interest in what remains of the company if the Asian assets are sold.

When he announced Thompson's hiring earlier this month, Bostock stressed that Yahoo intended to remain an independent, publicly traded company.

Yang had been someone more interested in preserving the company than he created than dismantling parts of its to boost the stock price, analysts said. "Investors tend to want to keep trying to fix the company than carve it apart," Gillis said.

Now that he is out of the way, investors are likely to conclude the sale of the Asian investments will eventually be completed, Schachter wrote.

Investor anger over Yang's handling of the Microsoft negotiations led to his resignation as CEO in late 2008 and the hiring of Silicon Valley veteran Carol Bartz to replace him. Bartz and Yang had gotten to know each other as part of Cisco Systems Inc.'s board of directors.

After initially hailing Bartz as the solution to Yahoo's problems, Yang and the rest of Yahoo's board fired her as CEO in September.

Yahoo's revenue has been falling in recent years even as advertisers have poured more money into the Internet. Much of the money, though, has been going to Google and Facebook's online social network, as Yahoo has fallen further behind in the race to innovate and develop products that attract Web traffic.

Despite its struggles, Yahoo remains profitable and still boasts a worldwide audience of 700 million people.

But visitors aren't sticking around Yahoo's services as much as they once did, depriving the company of more opportunities to sell ads - the main source of its revenue.

It has been a jarring comedown for Yahoo, which emerged as one of the Internet's first stars after Yang and Filo expanded the service beyond its roots as a hand-picked directory of websites.

Yahoo's early success turned it into a Wall Street darling and landed Yang on the covers of leading business magazines. At the height of the dot-com bubble 12 years ago, Yahoo's stock was trading above a split-adjusted $100 amid talk that the company might eventually try to buy a long-established media franchise such as the Walt Disney Co.

But now investors widely regard Yahoo as a misguided company that can't come up with a cohesive plan to define itself for Web surfers and

advertisers.

Yang and Bostock have been the focal point for much of the criticism, partly because of their key roles in the Microsoft talks in 2008. After buying a 5.2 percent stake in Yahoo last autumn, hedge fund manager Daniel Loeb demanded that both Bostock and Yang step down from the company's board. If they refused, Loeb indicated he would finance a shareholder rebellion to oust both men from the board.

Loeb's fund, Third Point LLC, didn't immediately return phone calls seeking comment late Tuesday.

Bostock, Yahoo's chairman for the past four years, has given no indication that he plans to step down.

Megaupload Site Wants Assets Back, To Fight Charges

The Internet website Megaupload.com, shut down by U.S. authorities over allegations that it illegally peddled copyrighted material, is trying to recover its servers and get back online, a lawyer for the company said on Friday.

The company and seven of its executives were charged in a 5-count, 72-page indictment unsealed on Thursday accusing them of engaging in a wide-ranging and lucrative scheme to offer material online without compensating the copyright holders.

Authorities in New Zealand arrested four of those charged, including one of its founders, who legally changed his name to Kim Dotcom. Assets were also seized money, servers, domain names and other assets in the United States and several countries.

"The company is looking at its legal options for getting back its servers and its domain and getting its servers back up online," Megaupload's lawyer Ira Rothken told Reuters. "Megaupload will vigorously defend itself."

He said the company simply offered online storage. "It is really offensive to say that just because people can upload bad things, therefore Megaupload is automatically responsible," he said.

No decision has been made yet about whether they will fight extradition from New Zealand to the United States, Rothken said.

U.S. authorities have painted a much darker picture of the company's operations, saying that Megaupload readily made available copyrighted material including music, television shows, movies, pornography and even terrorism propaganda videos.

Users could upload material to the company's sites, which then would create a link that could be distributed so others could download it, according to the indictment. Some paid subscription fees for faster upload and download speeds.

Despite complaints from copyright holders, the Megaupload did not remove all of the material when requested to do so, prosecutors said. The company's executives earned more than $175 million from subscription fees and advertising, they said.

Less than a day after U.S. authorities shut down the Megaupload.com site and several of its sister sites, there appeared to be an attempt to resurrect the site.

Twitter was flooded with messages circulating a new Internet Protocol address, but the site offered no substantive content immediately and it did not appear that it was sanctioned by Megaupload.

The new website, which is being hosted in the Netherlands, looked similar to the original Megaupload.com website. The company's lawyer said that he was not directly familiar with the new site.

"We're not familiar with any official effort at this point to get the site back up in light of the fact that its major servers are in the possession of the United States government and other governments," Rothken said.

One of those arrested on Thursday was Bram van der Kolk, who has citizenship in the Netherlands and New Zealand. He oversaw programming and the network structure for Megaupload's websites, according to court papers.

U.S. officials were asked on Thursday about the risk of the site reappearing elsewhere in the future, a key issue that has confronted authorities in the past when they've tried to shut down Internet sites selling counterfeit goods.

"Right now we're in the process of executing search and seizure warrants and certainly it's not going to pop up again today. But I couldn't speculate as to what may or may not happen in the future," one Justice Department official said on Thursday.

Another official said "maintaining and running and assembling a site like this is very expensive. And obviously the seizure of financial assets is critical in this type of investigation and prosecution in preventing it from going forward."

The case, which started as an investigation in March 2010, emerged just as lawmakers in Congress have been battling over new legislation sought by the television, movie and music industries that was aimed at making it harder for such material to be so easily peddled over the Internet.

Some major technology companies, including Google and Facebook, have sought to derail the current versions of the legislation because they were concerned they would lead to censorship and lengthy litigation.

Earlier on Friday, Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid postponed a vote on one bill that was set for Tuesday until several issues are resolved.

Twitter Users Unknowingly Take Part in Anonymous DDOS Attack

Several New Zealand governmental websites have been taken offline in the continued retaliation by self styled "hacktivist" group Anonymous as DDOS links are spread among unknowing Twitter users.

Just hours after numerous websites around the world, including Wikipedia and Reddit, blacked out in protest of the proposed SOPA (Stop Online

Piracy Act), the FBI announced that it had closed down one of the world's largest file sharing sites Megauploader.com.

The site, which had over 180 million registered users, was accused of copyright violation and its founder Kim Dotcom aka Kim Schmitz arrested. Shortly after, Anonymous launched an attack on several US based sites, including the FBI and Universal Music.

Anonymous has now turned its attention to New Zealand, reportedly taking down police.gov.nz, among other sites.

The attacks sparked a worldwide Twitter trend, "World War Web," after the organization (@YourAnonNews) tweeted several lines of blacked-out text with the words "WORLD WAR WEB. The Internet is here. Expect US" at around 14:30 GMT.

These attacks were allegedly carried out by spreading a link on Twitter that, when clicked on, repeatedly redirected any computer to the target website, thereby overloading the servers with traffic. Known as a DDOS attack, this is a tactic commonly used by Anonymous, though not through Twitter.

Gawker reports that the link is being shared among unknowing Twitter users at a rate of four times a second, often with no explanation other than that it relates to #operationmegaload, an operation mentioned by Anonymous in its January 19 video available at http://goo.gl/VUeWJ.

McAfee Patches Flaw That Turned Protected Systems into Spam Relays

Security software is an everyday necessity for most people, especially Windows users, businesses, and enterprises. But one of the ironies of security software is that, once in a while, it turns out to be the source of security problems all by itself. The latest instance involves McAfee s SaaS Total Protection suite, a cloud-based solution designed to provide comprehensive email and and Web filtering along with centralized security management for businesses and organizations. However, McAfee has just had to issue an update to the service to block a flaw that could let attackers execute code on protected machines, and to fix another problem that could potentially enable attackers to turn protected systems into spam relays.

"Two issues in SaaS for Total Protection have arisen in the past few days," wrote McAfee s David Marcus in the company s blog. "In the first, an attacker might misuse an ActiveX control to execute code. The second involves a misuse of our rumor technology to allow an attacker to use an affected machine as an open relay, which could be used to send spam."

McAfee says the ActiveX control issue, while new, is similar to a problem the company patched back in August 2011: As long as customers have applied that update, they aren t vulnerable to the new problem. McAfee has begun rolling out an update for the spam relaying issue, and customers should receive the update soon if they haven t already.

The Saas Total Protection suite s 'rumor' technology enables protected computers to communicate updates with each other in a fashion like peer-to-peer networking. The idea is to distribute updates automatically in-house on local networks rather than forcing every protected system to grab new updates from McAfee, potentially straining an organization s

Internet connectivity. According to reports, the service installs itself even if users don t specifically ask for it, and while it can be shut down using Windows built-in administrative tools it gets restarted whenever McAfee delivers a software update.

Although the spamming vulnerability never put data on protected machines at any risk, attackers were able to use the rumor service to essentially bounce email messages off the protected systems, making it appear to the rest of the Internet that the McAfee-protected computers were the origin of the spam, rather than the attackers themselves. As a result, some McAfee users were mysteriously finding their machines and networks blocked by spam filters - in one case, apparently by McAfee s own antispam technology within the organization.

College and Students Ravaged By Viruses for Over a Decade

Malware that lay undetected on the PCs at a US college for over a decade has probably allowed criminals as far afield as China, Russia and Iran to steal sensitive data, admins have discovered to their horror.

The scale of the data theft from City College in San Francisco (official motto: 'the truth shall make you free') is not yet known, but the length of time the malware was able to transmit data is giving IT staff cause for concern.

According to the San Francisco Chronicle, the problem only became apparent in November when security monitoring systems detected unusual traffic patterns emanating from one of the college's computer labs.

Closer examination revealed a clutch of malware that was scanning for data on computers attached to the network at the same time each night for up to a decade. In one example this involved sending what was found back to IP addresses associated with the infamous Russian Business network gang whose heyday was at least three years ago.

Widening the search, admins discovered similar problems on 17 different computer systems including servers used for admin, instructional and WiFi with only those holding medical data thought to be in the clear; payroll, admissions and accounting systems are still being analysed.

There is particular concern that students might have infected themselves via USB sticks while using College computers, potentially compromising external PCs used later on. Data at risk in this scenario would include online banking logins.

"We may never know the full extent of the damage, and how many lives have been affected by this," City College CTO David Hotchkiss told the Chronicle. "These viruses are shining a light on years of neglect."

That malware found its way on to computers in an environment such as university or college will surprise nobody. Harder to explain is the length of time a multitude of different pieces of common and certainly old malware was able to transmit data without being detected.

Educational hacks tend to be inside jobs, such as the former University of Central Missouri students who broke into databases and pilfered data on 90,000 people working for or attending the institution.

In 2010, a report from RSA drew attention to the growing number of
attacks on universities by outsiders, including one in which criminals
impersonated a university server in order to harvest data from students.

Study Finds Internet Addiction Causes Changes in Brain Development

Is Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) real? A new study suggests it may be
- and that its effects can be seen in the human brain.

The study asked those between the ages 14 and 21 questions about how their
internet use had negatively impacted their lives. Many of these questions
run parallel to those that help diagnose an alcohol or drug problem: "Have
you lied to your family members, therapist, or others to hide the truth of
your involvement with the internet?" "Have you taken the risk of losing a
significant relationship, job, educational, or career opportunity because
of the internet?" Researchers followed up with questions to the subjects'
friends and families.

Participants who were found to be "addicted" to the internet had
significant differences in brain development than those who were not. These
include areas of lower volume in the parts of the brain that control
emotional processing, executive thinking skills and attention, and
cognitive control - very similar to the brain changes in drug addicts.
There also appeared to be disruptions in the white matter between brain
cells, affecting how neurons communicate with each other. The longer a
person had suffered from IAD, the more pronounced the brain differenceswere.

There are a lot of questions still present in light of the study.
Researchers are not sure whether addiction to the internet causes peoples'
brains to develop differently, or whether the brains were already like
this, making people more susceptible addiction.

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